

## [Alexander Beaton]

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### FOLKLORE — WHITE PIONEERS

Miss Effie Cowan, P. W.

McLennan County, Texas

District No. 8.

No of words 1,000

File No. 240

Page No. 1 ALEXANDER BEATON, Gem Hill, (near Corsicana,) Texas.

Major Alexander Beaton was born at Inverness, Inverness-shire, the most beautiful and romantic part of the Highlands of Scotland, February 19, 1820. His parents, Donald and Margaret (Beaton) Beaton, died when he was in his thirteenth year. He received an academic education in his native town, and in his seventeenth year was sent to the city of London, England, where he entered the office of an accountant, where he remained for six years. Shortly after his first arrival in London, he witnessed the grandest sight and pageant of his life, the coronation of Queen Victoria. He came to the United States in 1843, in November of that year landing at New Orleans where, until 1844, he filled a position secured by him before he left London. He left New Orleans at the beginning of the yellow fever epidemic in [?], the local physicians and newspapers advising all unacclimated persons to pursue that course. He went from New Orleans to St. Louis and from the latter city to Bolivar, Polk County, Mo., where he taught school and read law until 1847 in the office of Colonel Thomas Ruffin, who was then known as one among the leading members of the bar in Southwest Missouri. In the summer of that year a call

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was made on the State of Missouri to raise her Third Regiment of Mounted Volunteers for service in Mexico, and Major Beaton volunteered for service during the war and became a member of Company R. of said regiment. Col. Ralls, of Ralls County, Mo., was afterwards elected Colonel of the regiment, which, after being duly equipped and made ready for service at 2 Fort Leavenworth, now in the State of Kansas, started on its march across the plains in July, 1847, to Santa Fe, New Mexico, where it took the place of Gen. Price's command, whose term of service had expired. Major Beaton went to Taos, New Mexico, with three companies of the regiment and remained there, doing duty as acting adjutant of the battalion, until the end of the war, when he returned to Independence, Mo., with the entire regimental command, where with his fellow-soldiers he was, in the fall of 1848, honorably discharged from the service. He now draws a pension of \$8.00 per month as a Mexican war veteran from the United States government. Shortly after his discharge from the army, he and Col. Ruffin came to Texas, stopping at Houston for a brief period and then took a look at the town of Washington on the Brazos, which was much spoken of at the time and believed by many to be destined for the dignity of a city of importance at some time. They afterwards visited and resided, for varying periods, at Brenham, Chappel Hill, and Richmond, Colonel Ruffin locating at the latter place. Major Beaton during his sojourn at Chappel Hill taught school for a few months.

He arrived at Corsicana on the 16th of March, 1850, then a small frontier village of about one hundred inhabitants, and has since resided in and near that place. In a short time after his arrival he was employed in the County Clerk's office and was later appointed to fill the unexpired term of a former incumbent of the office of County Assessor and Collector of taxes and, while so engaged, industriously applied himself to the study of law. He was admitted to the bar 3 in 1851, license being granted by Hon. O. M. Roberts, the presiding judge, afterwards Chief Justice of the State Supreme Court, Governor of Texas, and later, senior law professor in the University of Texas. Major Beaton afterwards, for a period of over thirty years, engaged in the practice of the profession, before and after the war for some years as a co-partner of the now distinguished statesman, Hon. R. Q. Mills, and

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since that time, until about ten years ago, when he retired from active pursuits to his "Gem Hill" home, near the city of Corsicana.

He has borne a conspicuous and helpful part in the upbuilding of Corsicana. The start in the making of Corsicana as a city was his successful effort in getting a depot of the Houston and Texas Central Railway located at the town in 1871. In the attainment of this object he was ably assisted by Mr. James Kerr, Sr., and Colonel William Croft. In honor of his services and liberality, without any desire or asking for it on his part, the people named the principal street in the city, Beaton Street, in his honor. He has been a life-long Democrat and has done good service for the party and for the cause of honest and accountable government. His fore-fathers for many generations were members of the Presbyterian Church, which with Calvinism and authoritative teaching he could not agree. He now worships with his wife in the Methodist Church, whose tenets and beliefs are more in accord with his own.

As previously stated, Major Beaton retired from active business and professional pursuits more than ten years ago and moved to his 4 residence, "Gem Hill," which overlooks the city of Corsicana and is one of the most exquisitely beautiful and well appointed country-seats in the South.

July 11, 1852, he married Elizabeth J. McKinney, daughter of Rev. Hampton McKinney, a famous pioneer and Methodist Episcopal preacher of Navarro County, who moved to this State from Illinois. Major and Mrs. Beaton have three children, two sons and a daughter. Their eldest son, Ralph, is a member of the firm of Damon, Beaton & Company, of Corsicana. Their only daughter, Mary Kate, is the wife of Dr. S. W. Johnson, of that city. Major Beaton was made a Master Mason in 1850 by General E. H. Tarrant, joining the first lodge organized in Corsicana. Major Beaton has won considerable distinction as an amateur geologist and investigator of the natural sciences, for which he has always possessed a passionate fondness and followed with a quiet and never flagging zeal. He has contributed many valuable articles (that have been widely copied) to magazines.

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The following telegram of April 29, 1895, from Austin, Texas, to the Dallas-Galveston News fitly illustrates the interest he feels in the cause of scientific progress: "It may not be generally known that a few weeks since the University of Texas came into the possession of the valuable and unique cabinet of minerals collected by Hon. Alexander Beaton, of Corsicana, on his home place, known as "Gem Hill", situated about a mile south of the town.

"Major Beaton has long been a student of nature and, being impressed with the remarkable beauty and purity of the drift-minerals found in the fields near the house, he took the pains to have many of